

Egypt

Mass Protests Challenge Islamist President

BY MAGGIE MICHAEL AND SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

CAIRO — More than 200,000 people thronged Cairo’s central Tahrir Square, protesting against Egypt’s Islamist president Tuesday in an opposition show of strength, as the standoff over Mohammed Morsi’s assertion of near-absolute powers escalated into the biggest challenge yet to his and the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule.

The massive, flag-waving, chanting crowd in the iconic plaza rivaled the size of some of the large protests of last year’s uprising that drove autocrat Hosni Mubarak from office. The same chants used against Mubarak were now turned against Egypt’s first freely elected leader.

“The people want to bring down the regime,” and “erhal, erhal” — Arabic for “leave, leave,” rang across the square.

Protests in Tahrir and several other cities Tuesday were sparked by edicts issued by Morsi last week that effectively neutralized the judiciary, the last branch of government he does not control. But it turned into a broader outpouring of anger against Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, which op-



Morsi

of Mahalla el-Kobra.

“Power has exposed the Brotherhood. We discovered their true face,” said Laila Salah, a housewife in the Tahrir protest who said she voted for Morsi in this summer’s presidential election. After Mubarak, she said, Egyptians would no longer consent to an autocrat.

“It’s like a wife whose husband was beating her and then she divorces him and becomes free,” she said. “If she remarries she’ll never accept another day of abuse.”

ponents say have used election victories to monopolize power, squeeze out rivals, and dictate a new, Islamist constitution, while doing little to solve Egypt’s mounting economic and security woes.

Clashes broke out in several cities as Morsi opponents tried to attack offices of the Brotherhood, setting fire to at least one. At least 100 people were injured when protesters and Brotherhood members protecting their office pelted each other with stones and firebombs in the Nile Delta city

Gehad el-Haddad, a senior adviser to the Brotherhood and its political party, said Morsi would not back down on his edicts. “We are not rescinding the declaration,” he told The Associated Press.

That sets the stage for a drawn-out battle between the two sides that could throw the nation into greater turmoil. Protest organizers on a stage in the square called for another mass rally on Friday. If the Brotherhood responds with mass rallies of its own, as some of its leaders have hinted, it would raise the prospect of greater violence after a series of clashes between the two camps in recent days.

A Tweet by the Brotherhood warned that if the opposition was able to bring out 200,000-300,000 “they should brace for millions in support” or Morsi.

Another flashpoint could come Sunday, when the constitutional court is due to rule on whether to dissolve the assembly writing the new constitution, which is dominated by the Brotherhood and Islamist allies. Morsi’s edicts explicitly banned the courts from disbanding the panel. If the court defies him and rules anyway, it would be a direct challenge that could spill over into the streets.

France To Vote ‘Yes’ On Palestinian Statehood

PARIS (AP) — France announced Tuesday that it plans to vote in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state at the U.N. General Assembly this week.

With the announcement, France becomes the first major European country to come out in favor, dealing a setback to Israel. The timing of the announcement appears aimed at swaying other European nations.

Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told parliament that France has long supported Palestinian ambitions for statehood and “will respond ‘Yes’” when the issue comes up for a vote “out of a concern for coherency.”

The Palestinians say the assembly is likely to vote Thursday on a resolution raising their status at the U.N. from an observer to a nonmember observer state, a move they believe is an important step toward a two-state solution with Israel. A Palestinian state would still not be a full General Assembly member, however.

Unlike the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the General Assembly and the resolution is virtually certain of approval. But such a vote by France — a permanent council member — could weigh on decisions in other European capitals.

Powerball Jackpot The Result Of Game Changes

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The historic Powerball jackpot boosted to \$500 million on Tuesday was all part of a plan lottery officials put in place early this year to build jackpots faster, drive sales and generate more money for states that run the game.

Their plan appears to be working. Powerball tickets doubled in price in January to \$2, and while the number of tickets sold initially dropped, sales revenue has increased by about 35 percent over 2011.

Sales for Powerball reached a record \$3.96 billion in fiscal 2012 and are expected to reach \$5 billion this year, said Chuck Strutt, executive director of the Des Moines, Iowa-based Multi-State Lottery Association, the group that runs the Powerball game.

There has been no Powerball winner since Oct. 6, and the jackpot already has reached a record level for the game. It was first posted at \$425 million but revised upward to \$500 million when brisk sales increased the payout. It’s the second highest jackpot in lottery history, behind only the \$656 million Mega Millions prize in March.

Netanyahu Seems Vulnerable In Re-Election Bid

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who appeared to be cruising to re-election a few weeks ago, suddenly appears vulnerable as the country prepares to go to the polls in January.

The political comeback of a popular former foreign minister on Tuesday, coupled with the ruling Likud Party’s selection of an especially hard-line slate of candidates, has suddenly raised questions about Netanyahu’s prospects. Eager to portray Netanyahu as an extremist, opposition parties see an opportunity to mount a formidable challenge to the Israeli leader.

Ousting Netanyahu remains a formidable task, but the return of Tzipi Livni, who served as Israel’s foreign minister and chief peace negotiator from 2006 to 2009, injected a high-profile name into what had been a lackluster race. Well respected internationally, Livni immediately took aim at what she called a “leadership vacuum” and promised an aggressive push for peace with the Palestinians.

“I came to fight for peace,” she said. “And I won’t allow anyone to turn peace into a bad word.”

During Netanyahu’s nearly four years in office, peace efforts with the Palestinians have remained frozen.



Netanyahu

Businesses Hurt By Great Lakes Water Levels

ONEKAMA, Mich. (AP) — For more than a century, easy access to Lake Michigan has made Onekama a popular place for summer visitors and a refuge for boaters fleeing dangerous storms. Now the community itself needs a rescue, from slumping lake levels that threaten its precious link to open water.

The Great Lakes, the world’s biggest freshwater system, are shrinking because of drought and rising temperatures, a trend that accelerated with this year’s almost snowless winter and scorching summer. Water levels have fallen to near-record lows on Lakes Michigan and Huron, while Erie, Ontario and Superior are below their historical averages. The decline is causing heavy economic losses, with cargo freighters forced to lighten their loads, marinas too shallow for pleasure boats and weeds sprouting on exposed bottomlands, chasing away swimmers and sunbathers.

Some of the greatest suffering is in small tourist towns that lack the economic diversity of bigger port cities. Yet they are last in line for federal money to deepen channels and repair infrastructure to support the boating traffic that keeps them afloat.

“How do you like our mud bog?” Township Supervisor Dave Meister asked on a recent afternoon, gesturing toward the shoreline of Portage Lake, part of a 2,500-acre inland waterway that connects Onekama to Lake Michigan. A wide expanse that normally would be submerged is now an ugly patchwork of puddles, muck and thick stands of head-high cattails. A grounded pontoon boat rested forlornly alongside a deserted dock.

The Army Corps of Engineers has estimated that about 30 small Great Lakes harbors will need attention in the next couple of years.



ISSAM RIMAWI/APA IMAGES/ZUMA PRESS/MCT

The remains of Yasser Arafat have been exhumed in Ramallah, West Bank, as part of an investigation into how the Palestinian leader died. Swiss, French and Russian experts were given samples to establish whether his death in Paris in 2004 at the age of 75 was the result of poisoning before the tomb was resealed.

Experts Exhume Remains Of Arafat

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Yasser Arafat’s political heirs on Tuesday opened his grave and foreign experts took samples of the iconic Palestinian leader’s remains as part of a long-shot attempt — eight years after his mysterious death — to determine whether he was poisoned.

Arafat died in November 2004 at a French military hospital, a month after suddenly falling ill at his West Bank compound, at the time besieged by Israeli troops.

The immediate cause of death was a stroke, but the underlying reasons were unclear, leading to widespread belief in the Arab world that Israel poisoned the 75-year-old symbol of Palestinian nationalism.

Israel has denied involvement in Arafat’s death.

The exhumation began before dawn Tuesday, under the cover of huge sheets of blue tarpaulin draped over Arafat’s mausoleum in his former gov-

ernment compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah. By mid-morning, the grave was reclosed, and officials from Arafat’s Fatah movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization laid wreaths at the mausoleum.

Palestinians had launched an investigation after Arafat’s death, but made no progress. The probe was revived this summer when a Swiss lab detected elevated traces of a lethal radioactive substance, polonium-210, in biological stains on his clothing.

The lab said the tests were inconclusive and that it needed to examine the remains for a clearer picture.

Arafat’s successor, Mahmoud Abbas, authorized the exhumation despite strong cultural and religious taboos against disturbing a gravesite, apparently to avoid any suggestion that he was standing in the way of a thorough investigation.

A Big Disconnect As ‘Fiscal Cliff’ Clock Ticks

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans’ newfound willingness to consider tax increases to avert the “fiscal cliff” comes with a significant caveat: larger cuts than Democrats seem willing to consider to benefit programs like Medicare, Medicaid and the president’s health care overhaul.

The disconnect on benefit programs, coupled with an impasse between Republicans and the White House over raising tax rates on upper-bracket earners, paints a bleak picture as the clock ticks toward a year-end fiscal debacle of automatic spending increases and harsh cuts to the Pentagon and domestic programs.

Democrats emboldened by the election are moving in the opposite direction from the GOP on curbing spending, refusing to look at cuts that were on the bargaining table just last year. Those include any changes to Social Security, even though President Barack Obama was willing back then to consider cuts in future benefits through lower cost-of-living increases. Obama also considered raising the eligibility age for Medicare, an idea that most Democrats oppose.

“I haven’t seen any suggestions on what they’re going to do on spending,” a frustrated Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said Tuesday. “There’s a certain cockiness that I’ve seen that is really astounding to me since we’re basically in the same position we were before.”

Well, says Obama’s most powerful ally on Capitol Hill, the Democrats are willing to tackle spending on entitlement programs if Republicans agree to raise income tax rates on the wealthiest Americans — a non-starter with Republicans still in control of the House.

“We hope that they can agree to the tax revenue that we’re talking about, and that is rate increases, and as the president’s said on a number of occasions, we’ll be happy to deal with entitlements,” Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Tuesday.

But Reid speaks only in the most general terms, wary of publicly embracing specific ideas like boosting Medicare premiums or raising the program’s eligibility age.

At the White House, Obama met with more than a dozen small business owners. Participants described the hour-long meeting as a listening session for Obama, with the business owners urging him to reach an

agreement.

“They had one message for the president, which is they need certainty. Please get this deal done as soon as possible. They very much want consumers out there knowing that they’re going to have money in their pockets to spend. That’s why it’s so important to pass the extension of the tax cuts for 98 percent of consumers, 97 percent of all small businesses,” said Small Business Administration head Karen Mills.

Obama hits the road on Friday, visiting a Pennsylvania toy factory and broadcasting his case to extend current tax rates for all but those families making more than \$250,000 a year.

Susan Rice

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations

Early years

Born 1964, Washington, D.C.
Education Bachelor’s degree, Stanford University, 1986; master’s degree, Oxford University, 1988; doctorate, Oxford University, 1990 (Rhodes scholar)
Prize Most distinguished doctoral dissertation in the U.K. in international relations

Diplomatic career

1993-1997 Various positions at the National Security Council during the Clinton administration, including policy advisor during the Rwanda genocide
1997-2001 Assistant secretary of state for African affairs; criticized for advising against accepting Sudan’s offer to help nab Osama bin Laden; 9-11 Commission later said Sudan would likely not have helped
2002-2009 Senior fellow at the Brookings Institution
2009-present Ambassador to U.N.; helped win stiff sanctions against Iran, North Korea and support for intervention in Libya; criticized by some Republicans for statements about attack on U.S. consulate in Libya
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Source: U.S. State Department; USA Today; MCT Photo Service

Rice Concession Fails To Mollify 3 In GOP

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice told lawmakers Tuesday that her initial explanation of the deadly Sept. 11 raid in Libya was wrong, but her concession failed to mollify three Republican senators who signaled they would oppose her possible nomination to be secretary of state.

In a closed-door meeting that Rice requested, the ambassador answered questions from Sens. John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte about her much-maligned explanations about the cause of the attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. She was joined by acting CIA Director Michael Morell.

“The talking points provided by the intelligence community, and the initial assessment upon which they were based, were incorrect in a key respect: There was no protest or demonstration in Benghazi,” Rice said in a statement after the meeting. “While we certainly wish that we had had perfect information just days after the terrorist attack, as is often the case the intelligence assessment has evolved.”

Rice’s unusual visit to Capitol Hill — typically only nominees meet privately with lawmakers — reflects the Obama administration’s campaign for the current front-runner to replace Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton against some strenuous GOP opposition.

“We are significantly troubled by many of the answers that we got and some that we didn’t get concerning evidence that was leading up to the attack on the consulate,” McCain told reporters after emerging from the hour-plus session that he described as candid.

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